DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 942 FL 018 924

AUTHOR	Caminero, Rosario; White, Ann
TITLE	Applying the Natural Approach to the Business Spanish Classroom.
PUB DATE	89
NOTE	17p.; In: Proceedings of the Annual Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages and Communications for World Business and the Professions (8th, Ann Arbor, MI, March 30-April 1, 1989).
PUB TYPE	Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Business Communication; Class Activities; Higher Education; *Introductory Courses; *Languages for Special Purposes; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *Spanish; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Natural Approach (Languages)

ABSTRACT

A modified Natural Approach was applied to the instruction of a beginning business Spanish course in which students are assumed to have had at least one year of Spanish instruction. In the Natural Approach, three stages of language acquisition are hypothesized: comprehension (pre-production), early speech (one- and two-word responses), and speech emergence (sentence production). In the modified approach, second-year (first-year business Spanish) activities are divided into three categories: pre-production, guided production, and production. Receptive and productive skills are stressed from the beginning. In the first of these, the instructor provides descriptive and explanatory input and students listen and infer meanings, linking new vocabulary and structures to visual stimuli. In the second stage, activities are designed for limited structured production. In the third stage, students use new vocabulary in situations or task-oriented activities. A variety of activities may be used at each stage, all focusing on the emerging capabilities of the stage. The method can be adapted to an intermediate language course. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED324942

APPLYING THE NATURAL APPROACH TO THE BUSINESS SPANISH CLASSROOM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. M. Voght

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Dr. Rosario Caminero
Department of Spanish and Portuguese
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1027

and

Dr. Ann White
Department of Romance and Classical Languages
Wells Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1027

FL018934

APPLYING THE NATURAL APPROACH TO THE BUSINESS SPANISH CLASSROOM

BY ROSARIO CAMINERO AND ANN S. WHITE

INTRODUCTION

Tracy Terrell, in his paper "Acquisition in the Natural Approach: the Binding/Access Framework" (1986), suggests that acquisition of a language form (grammatical or lexical) is "the process which leads to the ability to understand and produce that form correctly in a communicative context." According to Terrell, a form cannot be considered acquired until it can be understood and produced. Instructors at the beginning of their Natural Approach (NA) foreign language class should devote most of their classroom time to developing listening-comprehension and speaking skills which will enable their students to successfully communicate in the foreign language.

Terrell also indicates that there are three different stages of language acquisition: Comprehension (pre-production), early speech (one- and two-word responses), and speech emergence (sentence production).

Comprehension activities include, among others, Asher's TPR, the use of gestures and visual aids, and input taken from the students'own interests and characteristics. Their objective is to bind or link a meaning to its form, and also to determine the meaning of unknown forms in the input through context-dependent strategies.

Early speech production activities are centered also on

listening-comprehension activities, but now students begin to respond with single words using the vocabulary that already has been bound. Examples of these activities include yes-no questions, either/or questions, and wh-questions requiring one-word answers. During this stage instructors may also include open-ended statements and input through their teacher talk which will prepare the students for the more unstructured communication activities that will come later on in the lessons.

Speech emergence or sentence production constitutes the third stage of language acquisition. Two different types of abilities will be developed by the students during this stage: The ability to express a particular meaning with a particular form (Terrell refers to this spoken form as "access") and the ability to string forms together in appropriate ways (production strategies) (1986a). Access does not automatically follow from binding, so it is extremely important that the instructor provide multiple opportunities for the students to produce the new forms which are bound already in meaningnful contexts.

Since the goal of any beginning Business Spanish course is to produce proficient use of the language, it is important to select a methodology focused on "acquisition" of language form, particulary vocabulary. This is the reason why we have adopted/adapted Terrell's Natural Approach to our beginning Business Spanish class and we have called this methodology a "Modified Natural Approach".

Until now, the NA has been succesfully utilized in first-

year courses, however we believe it may be implemented effectively in the intermediate year. Building on the foundation of strong listening skills and vocabulary which a NA student typically develops in the first year, (White, 1988) it is possible to apply the basic structure of the Natural Approach model to a more advanced curriculum.

According to Krashen (1982 and elsewhere), students will continue to acquire language naturally if exposed to comprehensible input at an i + 1 level; that is, containing structures and lexicon slightly beyond their current level of mastery. Activities to reinforce and strengthen reading and writing skills as well as to further the acquisition of grammatical structures and vocabulary should be included.

Since we presuppose that students will have been exposed to one year of language instruction we propose a "Modified" Natural Approach with three clearly marked categories of acquisition activities for the second year. These may be termed the Pre-production stage, Guided production stage, and Production stage. This differs from Terrel's NA in that it is directed toward students with a prior linguistic base. Both receptive and productive skills will be stressed from the beginning. In this paper, such an approach to a Business Spanish curriculum will be described.

Clearly a beginning Business Spanish course (that is, a course for students at the post-elementary level of study) is a four-skill language course, with the central difference being

found in the lexicon provided, so it stands to reason that such a course can be used as an alternative intermediate track for any language program.

A typical lesson, for example regarding real estate, would begin with visual materials and realia, such as advertisements from Hispanic newspapers for house sales, mortgage options in banks, etc., to introduce the topic at hand. The instructor provides descriptive and explanatory input throughout the introductory session. This is the Pre-production stage, in which students listen and infer meanings linking new vocabulary and structures to visual stimuli. The teacher may verify understanding with comprehension check questions referring to the new material, for example, ¿El propietario es el que vende la casa o el que la compra? or ¿El arrendador compra o alquila una casa ?

The next stage, that of Guided production, consists of activities designed for limited structured production by students. An example is a sentence completion activity regarding real state which may include the following: Si usted quiere vender su casa, debe ponerse en contacto con un _____ (realtor). A word formation activity may be as follows: Diga un sustantivo derivado del verbo "arrendar" (for example, arrendador, arrendatario, arrendamiento).

The third stage is that of Production, in which students use the new vocabulary in situations or task-oriented activities. For example: "You are planning to buy a house. Explain to the realtor

your specifications for the ideal house i.e. price range, location, size, type of neighborhood, etc.

It is important to be mindful that grammar is viewed as a tool for communication, and that it is not a central focus in such a course. Nevertheless, it is crucial that students review grammatical structures as homework. The structures should correlate to the communication tasks of the current lesson. For example, a review of the preterite-imperfect when students will be asked to describe their experiences in buying and selling real state. The grammar review thus must reflect the notional/functional needs of each lesson.

Culture is an integral part of such a course as well, since it provides a necessary awareness of and sensitivity to societal customs and linguistic norms. At this point, it is important that stereotyping be eliminated as fully as possible so that students may more succesfully participate in business-related settings.

What follows are suggested activities for each stage of acquisition in a Business-oriented intermediate course:

PRE-PRODUCTION STAGE

1. Students listen to tapes, readings or dialogues that refer to the business topic of the lesson. The teacher asks questions in English to determine if the students have understood well. Students are allowed to respond in their native language.

2. Students can be given multiple-choice exercises (oral or written) in order to test their comprehension. These exercises

can be done either in English or Spanish, depending on the type of students one has. The teacher can ask the students to pay special attention to certain things while they are listening to the tapes, and afterwards can have the students select the correct answers in a multiple choice format. What the teacher wants is a low-anxiety atmosphere in which students are taken gradually to the Guided Production and Production stages. At this early stage, as well as later, teacher talk is an invaluable source of input.

3. Yes/no questions in which students respond yes or no to questions (in Spanish) formulated by the teacher.

4. As another activity the teacher may play a tape again or read the dialogue or reading for a second time, in order for the students to identify persons, places and objects. The students give only the names of the persons, places and objects referred to in the sentences and are not required to elaborate any more. This exercise can be done orally or as written work.

5. In another type of activity students listen again to the tape or reading and are asked to identify the Spanish expressions which are used for certain functions such as regret, asking directions, etc. This exercise should be written since such expressions are difficult to remember.

6. Drawn from the dialogues or the tapes and then enriched with synonyms and related terms, the vocabulary can be organized into nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and other expressions. These divisions help students focus on the grammatical function of the

word as well as its meaning. It is often effective to group and point out the related forms of one basic semantic family such as "finanzas-financiar-financiamiento-financiero."

GUIDED PRODUCTION STAGE

1. Listening-comprehension activities continue to be an essential part of this stage of instruction. Teacher talk continues to occupy an important role in that it is a primary source of comprehensible input.

2. Yes/no questions, either/or questions or Wh-questions that require a one word answer.

3. Sentence completion exercises are activities that require only one form of the new vocabulary to be completed. Sometimes infinitives are asked to be appropriately conjugated, proper agreement must be given, or the correct form of the article must be provided. This exercise may be done orally in class or as written homework. Here, instructors can use teacher talk to expand the responses of the students, providing them with input, which prepares them for the more open-ended communication activities that will come later on in the lessons.

5. Letters/synonyms. Students answer business letters or replace parts of the body of the letters with synonymous expressions. This exercise is designed to give students practice in reading and writing different types of business communications. After the first few chapters, words or phrases first employed in earlier chapters may be recycled in the letter to provide constant review.

5. Word formation. The students supply either the noun form or the verb form of the italicized word. Again, review items are introduced in this section after the opening chapters. This exercise is best done first with books opened, then orally in class and finally as written homework.

6. Definitions. The students read a definition in Spanish of a vocabulary word and then provide in Spanish the word being defined. The teacher can then expand the Spanish definition providing different examples or situations involving said vocabulary. This exercise may be done with the books closed if the instructor or another student reads the definitions.

7. English-Spanish equivalents. Some English sentences that represent slight variations on the selected language used in the dialogues or narration are given, and the students are to write the equivalent in Spanish. This exercise may be collected as homework and corrected, or the sentences may be placed on the blackboard for rapid correction. An important indirect outcome of this activity is that certain difficulties students may still be having with particular grammar points will surface. The teacher can then organize further work in those areas.

PRODUCTION

These activities may be carried out within a pair or small group format and can be done in both oral and written mode. It is important for the instructor to understand that students at this stage are able to recognize the new vocabulary, but they will not be able to produce it spontaneously until enough opportunities

are provided for them to actively participate in carefully designed classroom interactions. These exercises can be an opportunity to teach culture to students so that they learn the sociolinguistic factors which influence register and style of speech and writing as well as paralinguistic factors. "Students need to be given the opportunity to learn the sturdy vocabulary needed to perform routine social functions, such as how to purchase a house, get the car serviced, request information; as well as the emotive vocabulary needed for dimensional participation in a culture, such as how to offer condolences, express joy, pay a compliment, recognize sarcasms, and communicate displeasure" (Moraen: 1986). Activities during this stage should include role play, interviews, and dramatic simulations since they will help students to use language to express their own ideas and feelings. Also, sophisticated media, field trips, materials from the foreign culture such as fine arts, folklore, etc will aid students in develping a more well-rounded and objective view of the target culture and avoid reliance on estereotypical images. "A gradually forming sense of the totality of the culture--its themes, its assumptions, its values, its folk ideas--and an awareness of how these are expressed through the patterns of behavior and the creative products of the people must be built into all levels of instruction"(Moraen: 1986).

According to the above study the following cultural objectives should be seen as points of departure in the teaching

of culture: Students of a foreign language and culture should:

1. Be able to say and do the culturally acceptable thing in ordinary social situations and in certain extraordinary situations;

2. Know why these behaviors are important to members of the culture and how they fit harmoniously into the culture's system of values;

3. Be able to interpret the visual elements of the culture (signs, symbols, objects, environmental factos, and nonverbal behavior) in the same way as do members of the culture;

4. Be able to evaluate generalizations made by and about the members of the target culture. (This requires an awareness of stereotyping and of the distortion in perspective caused by prejudice. It also requires an awareness of the similarities and differences of world view between the student's own and the target culture.)

5. Know how to keep growing in cultural understanding through interaction with native speakers, participation in cultural events, intelligent appraisal of the mass media, and enjoyment of literature and the arts.

Following are some of the activities that are appropriate for the Production stage:

1. Clarifications. Students are presented with an italicized word or phrase in a sentence and are asked to clarify the meaning of this word or phrase by explaining it in Spanish in their own words.

2. Business information. Students respond in Spanish to a statement calling for simple business related information based on the data already presented in the dialogues or the narration. For example, students may be asked to describe what a business professional might do in a given circumstance. Students should be allowed to prepare for this exercise before it is presented in the classroom.

3. Role-playing. Students are given a situational context and then presented with statements in English to be expressed in Spanish within that situation. This role playing can call for the use of language with a precise social function such as expressing agreement, presenting a project, showing interest or giving advice. This activity demands a relatively systematic usage of vocabulary but is flexible enough to allow varied responses, even with a limited vocabulary. It is often very effective to have several students role play the same situation .

4. Interviews. This activity often involves two students: one asks the questions and the other answers. The interviewer takes notes on the responses of the interviewee. Students can switch roles and follow the same procedure. In the follow up, they are asked to give the class information on the person interviewed. This information should be presented in the narrative form, with the teacher only intervening to clarify or specify. (This activity goes very well with the topic of job interviewing in a Hispanic country.)

5. Panel discussions. This activity may involve 3 to 5

students' in role playing and requires longer and more formal statements from them. Here, the objective is to increase the students linguistic and business skills and to illustrate the way in which professionals behave during public service or participate in some social activities. This exercise is most effective when the other students in class, after listening critically to the formal presentation by panel members, ask questions or make comments. The following are different topics that lend themselves well to panel discussion: The economy of Hispano-American countries; investing in real state; how to select the best house for you, etc.

6. Special guest speakers can be invited to give informal lectures in relation to a particular topic being discussed. The lecture should be conducted in Spanish and can be at a level somewhat above the students' level of mastery. Afterward, the students can ask questions of the lecturer. It is a good idea to have students prepare in advance for the particular lecture by having them review at home the topic to be discussed. This activity serves for both recognition and reinforcement of the vocabulary. For homework, the teacher may ask the students to write a short composition on the lecturer's presentation, thus integrating the development of the writing skills to the development of the other skills of listening, speaking, and reading.

7. Translation/Interpretation. In this "modified" NA Business Spanish class instructors can use translation sporadically to

clarify meanings of complex business terms or institutions unfamiliar in American culture. Interpretation activities are also useful at this stage. For example, one student acts as a Spanish speaking client who explains a situation or problem to a student, who acts as interpreter. The "interpreter" then, explains the situation to a third student who supposedly speaks only English. The interaction continues with the "interpreter" acting as intermediary. (Curry, et. al.: 1985)

8. Written and/or oral report. In this exercise the student presents, in writing, orally, or both, the text of a report relating to the current lesson. The instructor may choose to correct the content of an oral report in conference with the student to facilitate the later presentation. Written reports may be corrected outright and may serve as a point of departure for oral reports leading to class discussions.

9. Composition. This activity calls for a short composition on a personal experience that the student may have had in a situation related to the lesson topic or an expository paper supporting an opinion held about the business topic.

10. Instructors should bring to class relevant readings taken from current business magazines, articles, or newspapers since in such a class the readings shouldn't be limited to those provided by the textbooks being used. These exercises will help students to integrate the four skills. Activities should include those which encourage contextual guessing, selective reading for main ideas, appropriate dictionary usage, and effective reading

strategies to confirm hypotheses (Phillips,(1984). When the materials related to a specific business topic are difficult to obtain, instructors should prepare their own mixture of pedagogical reading materials and simulated authentic discourse (Omaggio, 1986).

CONCLUSION

The above activities are only some examples of the many which may be used in an Intermediate year Business Spanish class following a "modified" Natural Approach. This serves as a model for a sequence of activities to be carried out at each stage of acquisition during the learning process. This paper suggests that the Natural Approach is adaptable to courses such as Business Spanish which may be offered as alternative instruction at the second year level. The three phases of acquisition outlined here serve as an effective and different approach to the planning of such courses.

REFERENCES

Curry, Richard, J. Rojas, M. Nelson, E. Sepulveda and G. Petersen. 1985. Carreras: Negocios. Boston. MA: Houghton Mifflin, Co.

Krashen, Stephen G. 1982. Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition, New York, NY: Pergamon Press.

Omaggio, Alice C. 1986. Teaching Language in Context. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.

Morain, Genelle. 1986. The Role of Culture in Foreign anguage Education. Center for Applied LInguistics: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.

Phillips, June. 1984. Practical Implications of Recent Research in Reading. Foreign Language Annals 17.

Terrell, Tracy D. 1977. A Natural Approach to Second Language Acquisition and Learning. Modern Language Journal 61.7.

1982. The Natural Approach to Language Teaching: An Update. Modern Language Jornal 66.

19886a. Acquisition in the Natural Approach: Binding and Access Framework. Modern Language Journal 70.

et al. 1986b. Dos Mundos: A Communicative Approach. New York: Random House

White, Ann S. 1988. Listening Comprehension and Affect in Natural Approach Students of Spanish. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Pittsburgh.

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Education
Research and
Improvement (OERI)

ERIC

Date Filmed

March 29, 1991